

*A mythic vision of our soul's quest for  
radical freedom, boundless love  
and unshakeable equanimity.*

# ASCENT TO UNION

LAWRENCE EDWARDS, PHD

**This book is a gift.**

I hope you enjoy it and then pass it on to a friend!

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence Edwards'.

Lawrence Edwards, PhD

AUTHOR OF

*Awakening Kundalini: The Path To*

*Radical Freedom; Kali's Bazaar penned by Kalidas*

*O My Beloved: Whisperings From The Divine Heard By Kalidas*

# ASCENT TO UNION

EXCERPTED FROM:

## *The Soul's Journey: Guidance From The Divine Within*

By Lawrence Edwards, PhD

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# INTRODUCTION

The *Ascent to Union* is one of several mythic visions included in the book *The Soul's Journey: Guidance From The Divine Within*. It was given to illuminate our soul's journey through life as guided by the living presence of the divine, which our spiritual practices attune us to. That inner presence of the divine is known as Kundalini Shakti in the yogic tradition. It is known by different names in every spiritual tradition – Holy Spirit, bodhicitta, Grace, Pure I-Consciousness, chi, etc., and every mystic who comes to know the divine does so through her grace.

In 1986 as a graduate student at Temple University, I was writing my doctoral dissertation on research I had conducted into the psychological changes and spiritual growth experienced by long-term practioners of an ancient traditional form of Kundalini yoga and meditation.<sup>1</sup> At that time, I had been formally practicing meditation for 16 years. Imagine being in a deeply silent, still meditation, when suddenly a detailed vision starring a powerful Queen on a quest in ancient times unfolds before your inner eye! That's what happened to me. The vision is an archetypal story of how we go from ordinary states of consciousness and everyday life pursuits, to seeking the highest states of Consciousness, while transforming our lives in the process. Along the way profound states of unshakeable peace, deep wisdom, boundless love and compassion, and dissolving into Light beyond light occur. The vision illumines the ancient symbolic nature of the centers of consciousness known as chakras and the process of transcending and subsuming those levels of consciousness on one's spiritual journey. My professional training had included many years studying Jungian psychology and I was fascinated by the potent symbols and images revealed in the vision.

In the yogic tradition, Kundalini Shakti is also known as the power of transformation and revelation, the power of universal Consciousness that is the root of all yogas. It is the force that carries one to the attainment of unity Consciousness, sahaja samadhi, the highest samadhi, the living samadhi that embraces all of life. In India she is revered as a great Goddess. What follows

is her gift. Part One is the meditation vision of the Ascent to Union; Part Two unfolds the symbolic meanings of what appeared in the meditation vision. I hope this timeless story of our soul's journey will serve to inform and inspire your journey. The full account, along with many more of her gifts, visions, and teachings, can be found in the book: *The Soul's Journey: Guidance From The Divine Within*.

## PART I: *The Ascent to Union*

As I sank deep into meditation, I found myself descending through space and time, as if from high above the earth, to an island nation of old in a northern sea. I was present there not as a person, but rather as a formless witness-consciousness viewing the scenes and often aware of what people were thinking, feeling, or experiencing as I watched them. A fiery, independent young Queen ruled this country. She was loved and respected, as well as somewhat feared by her people. But the Queen had grown bored with rulership.

"I've done all, conquered all, and experienced all. What am I to do now?" she asked her advisors. They had no answers. She paced around the royal castle and roamed the shores of her great nation, unable to spend the restlessness that agitated her. She finally took refuge in her private chapel, praying in earnest for guidance. In a moment of inspiration, the Queen saw what she must do next. Gathering her ministers and advisors together, she told them, "I'm going in search of the mysterious lands beyond the vast oceans far to the south. We've always heard rumors of a wondrous rich land beyond turmoil, beyond time. I'm going to find that place." The ministers were stunned by her announcement, but knew that once her mind was set there was no altering it.

She called upon a brave, commanding sea captain to outfit a sailing vessel and prepare for a lengthy voyage across the great oceans into the unknown. The captain, hailed by most simply as Captain or Cap, had a trusted first mate, Will, with whom he always sailed. Together they gathered a crew and provisions. The crew

was typical of the day—a band of drunkards, thieves, and ruffians pressed into service. Cap and Willy would whip them into shape so they could man the Queen’s ship on her quest.

Captain procured various charts and maps indicating unexplored lands far to the south. Only a handful of people had ever attempted the journey and none returned to tell of it. The maps were certain to be inaccurate, but they were the only ones available. The Queen prayed to God for guidance and protection on their journey. She had trusted in the unseen hand of grace before and had never been let down. They set sail, driven by the Queen’s restless spirit, directed by Cap’s scant knowledge, and unaware of the true power drawing them toward their destination.

Month after month they followed the charts, until at last they sailed beyond even those unreliable guides. High atop the main mast the lookout searched in vain for landfall. They were grateful merely to find an occasional tiny island with fresh drinking water. The crew began complaining about their miserable conditions and sparks of anger threatened to ignite a mutiny. By now they were drifting, becalmed, lost on a limitless expanse of sea. Provisions were running out and drinking water was nearly gone. The minute rations didn’t meet the body’s need for food or drink. All were racked by hunger and thirst. The Queen’s indomitable spirit barely kept them afloat.

At last, on the horizon the lookout spotted something—not land, but storm clouds! They rejoiced as the breeze picked up and rain began falling on their parched lips. For the first time in weeks the ship’s sails billowed in the wind. Finally, they were moving ahead once again. Hope renewed their spirits!

The rain and wind steadily increased. The storm worsened as thundering black clouds turned day into night. Powerful gales churned the seas into towering waves. The tempest blew the ship according to its whim. Hope fled as fear, spurred by thunder and lightning, took the crew’s hearts. Men hurled overboard by wind and waves drowned in the boiling ocean. The fury of the storm built until a brilliant bolt of lightning struck the main mast, blowing the vessel to bits!

As the Queen regained consciousness, she could smell the rich scent of fertile earth. She was lying face down on grassy soil. The sun shone in a blue sky dappled with fair-weather clouds. Unconscious, Cap and Will lay sprawled on the ground not far from the Queen. Her eyes scanned the surrounds. No other survivors were visible. A short distance from them stretched a white sandy beach washed by ocean waves.

The Queen arose, stretching. She helped Cap and Willy to awaken. The two men were disoriented and slow to come around. They couldn't believe they had survived that enormous bolt of lightning. The trio searched for survivors but none were found. Not so much as a splinter of the ship remained. The storm had consumed everything.

Cap and Willy were despondent, mourning all those who had been lost. They felt stranded, everything familiar was gone. Their whole way of life, even the hope of returning home—disappeared with the ship and crew. "What will become of us?" they anxiously wondered.

In contrast, the Queen felt renewed determination. She knew she had to move on—to explore the place where fate had deposited her. She offered a prayer of thanks to God for sparing their lives and asked for strength, guidance, and protection on the journey ahead.

While the two men sank into despair, the Queen investigated the area. When she returned, she reported to them that simple farmers inhabited the land. They worked the soil, tended their animals, and were content to maintain their existence. This sounded most appealing to Willy. He wished to remain right there, safe and secure. The local people knew little of the territories beyond their own small township, and at this point Willy didn't care. Cap thought it would be a good place to rest and take time to figure out how to get back to sea.

During her searches, the Queen had found a road originating in the area and leading inland to some distant city. She sensed that something tremendous awaited her on that road. She told Cap and Willy "You must continue on. There's no sense pining over what is lost or indulging such sentiments. Great discoveries lie ahead for us, greater than you can ever imagine." The Queen persuaded

them, as her subjects and fellow explorers, to leave with her for the unknown city.

Taking action and moving on lightened their spirits. After a few days travel the city appeared in the distance. In a strange way, it seemed to be floating. Indeed, as they approached it, they found it to be built on water. This city, the City of Water, had a surreal quality. A festive mood of celebration pervaded the city. The trio found the citizens feasting, drinking, and openly playing around sexually. The Queen and Cap realized that the festival was a fertility rite. Willy didn't care what it was, he just ran after every alluring woman who beckoned him!

This watery town and its beautiful women fascinated the Captain. He thought, "I bet I could fulfill every desire or fantasy I've ever had!" He looked forward to remaining there for some time. Willy shared the captain's desire to stay, but the Queen felt no attraction for this city. Exploring the City of Water, she discovered that the road that had brought them here continued straight through and into the wilderness beyond. She felt an urge to continue their journey, to follow the road onward. She prodded Captain and Will to forego their pleasures and accompany her. They had already found there was a dark side to this place of passions and weren't entirely resistant to moving on. Jealousy, greed, and rage showed themselves in back-alley fights they had narrowly escaped.

The Queen had learned there was another city farther ahead. The main road went directly there, while smaller roads and footpaths branched off into the countryside. Willy and Cap, like children, always wanted to explore some byway. The Queen, determined not to lose any time in side adventures, kept them to the main road. After several days of travel, as night fell, a red glow on the horizon marked their next destination: the City of Fire.

The City of Fire was just that—fiery. Glowing molten lava pits, steamy hot springs, and flaming volcanoes marked the landscape around it. The people of this city were very different from those of the City of Water. These people were strong-willed, disciplined, and proud of their accomplishments. They had conquered the flaming countryside and expected to further increase their domain.



Willy liked these people. He joined them for the pleasure of their company. He felt invigorated from the hard work that they did with such enthusiasm and determination. Captain was also very impressed by the people of this fiery land. He saw in their desires for expansion a place for himself. A great army could be assembled from a body of self-disciplined, mighty people—and who better to lead that army than himself! He envisioned commanding them in conquest of greater and greater lands.

The Queen met with the rulers of the City of Fire. They brought her up to the top of a high ridge that encircled the city. The leaders explained how they had conquered the land and put the element of fire to their use. From their high lookout they pointed to all the city boasted of: a populace of industrious and determined people; great trades built on fire—blast furnaces, steel and iron works, and much more. The city fathers were very proud of their citizens and all they had accomplished.

The Queen commended them on their achievements as she surveyed the surrounds. Suddenly, something outside the city piqued her curiosity. While on the ridge she noticed what appeared to be a speck of light on the horizon. It seemed to change colors as she gazed at it. The Queen asked the men what it was. Immediately they warned her not to stare at it.

“The light has an alluring quality,” said one of the rulers. “Those who stare at it become irresistibly drawn to it. Its source is rumored to be in a distant city, but people who go there almost never returned; those who have made it back never fully regain their minds!”

From their high vantage point, the Queen could see that the road by which they had entered the City of Fire continued straight through and headed directly towards the curious light. She knew she must go there at once. She had a growing sense that a final destination lay before her, a place where her restlessness would cease. Could the next city be that place?

The Queen sought out Captain and Will. She prevailed upon them to give up their ideas of remaining in the City of Fire and accompany her. Thus, the trio set off for the unknown city ahead.

The road traversed a broad plain that rose in the distance. Winds swept down the plain from the direction of the light. The nearer they came to the city the more distinct the light became. It constantly changed color in a slowly shifting manner. The effect of the light grew stronger as they traveled toward it. First the Queen, then Captain and Will, noticed that their moods and feelings altered with changes in the light's hue. By the time they reached the city, a steady wind was blowing, accentuating the fleeting quality of the moment and of one's moods.

Once inside the windy city, located upon a high plateau, the effect of the light was dramatic. People in the city were totally enthralled by it. Cap and Willy immediately succumbed to it. Rather than accompanying the Queen, they sat on a bench in a plaza, content to experience the play of thoughts, feelings, and moods that danced to the changing light. The constant flow of their minds matched the ceaseless winds.

The Queen searched for the source of this bewitching light. Her determination to find it and the strength of her mind empowered her to be detached from its effects. She watched the light, refusing to allow herself to be swept away by it. After some time, she noticed that occasionally it would flash brilliantly and clearly. Everything would be illumined as it truly was, undistorted by the mysterious colors. In those flashes of clarity, the source of the light stood revealed. Oddly enough, the Queen was the only one in the city interested in going to the source. Everyone else was so lost in the play of colors and moods that the moments of clarity were mistaken for just another projection of their minds and not recognized as revealing anything more.

The Queen saw the light radiating from atop a stone pinnacle in the heart of the city. She wound her way through the streets to the base of the towering rock. There was no way to ascend it except by scaling its nearly vertical side. The wind swept around her as she clung to the stone and inched her way up. The top of the pinnacle was flattened and invisible to her while climbing. With tremendous effort she reached her goal.

The Queen drew herself onto the top and was stunned to see a small, brilliant, blue-white orb of light present as if suspended just

above the pinnacle. Its transcendent beauty dazzled her while its utter stillness brought all her agitation to a halt. The light radiated an aura of pure divinity, enveloping her, embracing her with love. Falling to her knees in reverence before the light, tears of joy streamed down her face. As she gazed at it, the boundary between herself and the light began to dissolve. The light was pure, effulgent, Divine Consciousness, absorbing and stilling her mind. The most profound peace settled over her. She floated in quiet ecstasy, totally unaware of her surroundings, absorbed in the pure Light of Consciousness.

After a while, the thought arose in her mind, "Ah, finally I've reached my destination."

From within her mind the Divine Light's greater consciousness answered, "No." She again became aware of her separate identity, sitting atop the pinnacle, staring at the exquisite light. She looked around and saw crystal-like filaments of various colors dangling in mid-air around the light. It was these wondrous crystals that colored the light and changed the effect the pure light had on the mind. Her attention returned to the unwavering effulgent orb. She felt so content gazing upon it, she thought, "How could this not be my destination?" From within her the Divine Light answered, "Your road continues on, your destination lies ahead." Her attention was directed towards the city and plain far below. She could see that the road that brought her to this city continued on toward the towering mountains in the distance. What the Light had revealed was undeniably true. The Queen longed passionately to reach the end of her journey, all the more so now that she had tasted what was to come. She bowed reverently to the Light and began her descent from the pinnacle. The tireless wind whipped around her. Once on the ground she searched for Captain and Will.

The Queen found them still sitting enthralled in the plaza. She had to force them to pay attention to her as she explained how the lights deluded the mind. The two began to watch the shifting lights without being totally swept away by them. The Queen finally enabled Willy and Cap to act independently of the play of lights, though Willy moved more out of obedience to her than from any understanding or freedom of his own. The Queen told

them their destination still lay ahead. The road was clear and off they went.

Willy and Cap again found many side-paths leading away from the road but the Queen had no patience for diversions! With mounting anticipation, she sought her destination.

The road climbing into the mountains became more arduous with each mile. The three explorers had become leaner and stronger from persevering through the physical and emotional demands of the journey. As their path rose higher it tested the men's endurance. The Queen's energy seemed boundless and she inspired Willy and Cap upward.

Finally, they caught their first glimpse of the next city in the distance. It was nestled in a high, snowy, mountain pass. Gleaming white peaks towered above it. The city shone blue-white and ethereal in the sunlight, as if it were made of crystal or ice. While on the outskirts of the Ethereal City the trio began meeting its citizens. Many different languages were spoken there, yet in some strange way, even if you didn't speak another person's language, you could understand and be understood. How this occurred was a mystery to Cap and Willy, though the Queen intuited what powers were at work here. They also noticed that the closer they came to the city, the more distinctly they could hear what sounded like chants or mantras rising from within it.

Entering this blue-white glittering city they found great halls with high, vaulted ceilings. Some halls were used for chanting mantras that transported one to sublime states of meditation. In other halls people could be found gathered listening to a storyteller spinning tales of incredible intricacy. The stories became real to anyone present, allowing the listener to feel as though they were fully participating in the tale. Such story halls were so alluring, so captivating for some people, that they spent all their time in them, preferring those dramas and illusions to reality. Cap and Willy lingered in one of the story halls while the Queen sought the leaders of this mysterious Ethereal City.

She was told that there were three masters of the city whom she could trust completely, for they spoke only the truth. The Queen

sought them out with only one purpose in mind—to find out if this was her final destination or if indeed it still lay ahead as her heart told her. Finding the masters, she gained an audience with them. They recognized her noble nature and treated her with great honor and respect. She immediately asked, “This isn’t my destination, is it?”

“No,” they replied, “your goal remains ahead in the distance. To reach it you must continue on a narrow path high into the mountains.” She was glad to have them confirm what she already knew. The Queen had intuited the nature of the power underlying the chants, mantras, and stories coming from the Ethereal City. As she discussed the creative power of sound and words with the masters, the clarity and depth of her understanding amazed them. The Queen bid them farewell and returned for her traveling companions.

Captain and Will would have been content to stay, but the Queen’s determination burned fiercely, ready to consume all obstacles and distance between her and their journey’s end. She had to drag Cap and Willy from their fantasy world and lead them out of the Ethereal City. The Queen tried in vain to tell her companions about the power of Consciousness to affect the mind and body through words and sounds. Willy couldn’t understand any of it, and Captain grasped only a small portion of her explanation. The complex science of the power of vibration was beyond them.

The path, barely wide enough for one person, took them straight up into the highest mountains. Making progress became more and more difficult. Often the path wasn’t even visible to the two men. Though Will and Captain had been toughened by the journey, the rigorous climbing overwhelmed their strength and perseverance. On several occasions Captain tried to convince the Queen to stop, to be satisfied with the heights they had achieved thus far. He told her to look back and see for herself that all the lands and cities lay far below them. What city could possibly lie ahead, what little territory could be gained by struggling on, he asked. Captain argued with the Queen, but she would neither look back nor stop, except to allow them to regain their strength for continuing onward.

Many days of enormously difficult climbing beyond the Ethereal City brought them to the highest peak of the world. At last, the

nearly invisible path led them toward the summit. The Queen was making the ascent easily, but Willy and Cap struggled and could not continue without her. They marveled at her strength. She infused them with all the energy they needed. As dusk fell, they approached the broadened summit covered with snow and ice.

Astonishingly, atop the summit in the distance they could make out a small cottage! On either side of the door, square windows, each with four square panes, poured warm candlelight onto the snow, while smoke curled from the chimney. An old man sat outside the open door, apparently waiting for them! The Queen again wondered if this were her destination.

The trio reached the cottage and the old man invited them inside. As they entered the cozy warm home, they found a table set for three and a meal prepared. The old man refused to answer any questions until they had eaten and rested. That suited Cap and Willy just fine! They ate ravenously and afterward lay down to sleep. The two were out in no time.

The Queen, however, neither ate nor slept. She couldn't take her eyes off the old man. He emanated profound stillness. How had he known they were coming? Why did she feel as if he knew her completely—perhaps even better than she knew herself? Was he her destination; would her restlessness cease in him? Thus, her mind went on as she sat drinking in the old man with her eyes. Fine streams of subtle blue light radiated from his eyes. The Queen's gaze became fixed on his eyes, absorbed, lost in their light.

After some hours, Cap and Will awoke. They had slept much of the night away, awakening in the pre-dawn darkness. The Queen was eager to pose her question. In the candlelight, the old man sat ready to answer her. She asked if this were her destination. He simply said, "No."

"Where then?" "Ahead, still farther."

Captain and Will started arguing. How could that be? They were on the summit. Did they have to backtrack? Did more mountains lie ahead? Why should they bother? And on and on. The old man sat back quietly watching them. The Queen paid little attention to her companions' objections.

Finally, the old man said quietly, "Only she can continue. You two must remain here and await her return."

Will and Captain were startled and angered by his pronouncement. They objected further. Who was this old man to tell them what to do? They had made it this far without his help. Why should they pay any attention to him? Cap told the Queen they should leave immediately.

The Queen sat still during their dispute, absorbed in gazing at the old man. She knew he spoke the truth; no arguments could alter that. The Queen turned to Captain and Will, telling them quietly, yet forcefully, that they must remain here while she continued her journey. "You have faithfully obeyed my commands all the way to this point, and you must do so again. I promise I'll return," she said.

The old man beckoned her to follow him through the door into the night. Leading her along a path visible only to them, he held her hand. The night sky glittered with stars. As they walked, she saw in the distance, high above them, an orb of light like the moon. They continued along, seemingly drawn by the light. Her gaze was held fixed on it. The light reminded her of that exquisite orb of divine effulgence that she had encountered atop the pinnacle in the Windy City. They continued toward the light.

For a moment she glanced down and realized they were off the ground, ascending straight up! She caught sight of her own body, which no longer had form, but appeared to be glowing light. Astonished, she turned to the old man, but he too was radiant light! She looked up at the rapidly expanding orb of light, as all three merged. "I AM LIGHT! I AM LIGHT! All is Light, Divine Conscious Light, exquisite, blissful, Light!" The universe was the Light of Consciousness, she was that Light of Consciousness. All distinctions, all separations, all boundaries dissolved. There was no time, no Queen, no journey, and no destination. Simultaneously she transcended everything and yet encompassed all of creation within her being. Words cannot describe or even approach that state of Consciousness. Absorbed in perfect unity awareness an eternity passed. . .

Or was it a moment?

It seemed that after some time her form re-emerged from the Light, forever transfigured, in essence forever one with the Infinite Effulgence. She descended to the summit, where her faithful companions, Captain and Will, awaited her. As she approached, they stared in wonder. Her stunning radiance and profound serenity overwhelmed them. They fell to their knees in reverence. With great love she raised them up, seeing them as rays of her own Self. She dwelt with them until the end of their days.

Wherever she went she was honored and revered. Her blessings flowed to anyone who saw her or made even the smallest offering of love or devotion. Captain and Will served her with loving abandon and total surrender. Though they traveled the world, wherever she went all she encountered was the one Self, the one Light, revealing its inexhaustible power to take on infinite forms. With great delight and love she embraced all forms of her Self. In time Captain and Will began to shine as if from the reflected brilliance of their Queen. At their death, in a flash of light, the three finally merged into the Infinite Effulgence.

## PART II:

# *Commentary on the meaning of the Ascent to Union*

After this extraordinary vision of the entire spiritual journey unfolded before my inner eye, I slowly began to drift up out of that profoundly deep state. Before I came back to ordinary consciousness, I heard a beautiful, strong feminine voice speak to me from within; it was the voice of the Goddess Kundalini Shakti. She said that the vision was a gift, not meant for me alone, but for all who would read it. She instructed me to write it down and have it published. I was stunned by the vision, but now to hear the divine Kundalini Shakti herself speaking to me, directing me to write— this was overwhelming! Although I knew She was really a facet of my Self, it was clear She was much greater than the “I” I’m



usually identified with! I'm sure I would have been totally overcome if She hadn't also given me the strength of mind to withstand Her radiant presence. I couldn't conceive of remembering all I had been shown, and I began to feel as if I would fail to fulfill Her command. Kundalini Shakti took care of that too. She proceeded to take me back to the beginning of the vision and show me the events again, so that I could write them down. As She did this, She also showed me more about the meaning of various portions of the vision. Occasionally She would also speak, telling me what the symbolism meant, though for the most part the thoughts concerning the meaning of each scene would simply appear in my mind as my awareness revisited it. The following explication is what I received from Shakti Kundalini concerning the Queen's journey.

The Ascent to Union is a journey symbolizing the spiritual quest and transformation of consciousness from ordinary worldly existence to transcendence and union with God. The Queen represents our inner power of consciousness, the Goddess Kundalini. She is the Divine Light of Consciousness, the indwelling Holy Spirit. Kundalini made it clear that it is very important for us to understand that She is not something foreign or alien to us, even if the words or concepts used to describe Her are. She is as much a part of you and me as our flesh and blood, our thoughts and feelings. Kundalini is even more basic to us than those things; She is the dynamic power of our true eternal Self.

Captain symbolizes our ego/mind, our limited sense of self and ordinary waking-state intellect. Captain has Will as his faithful servant, companion, and first mate. Will symbolizes our body, with its more instinctive quality of awareness. Willy and Cap remain close to each other throughout the journey, just as the mind and body are intertwined in human existence. The Queen rules both and is independent of them, just as our supremely free inner Shakti, the divine Kundalini, rules the mind and body, directing them from within.

At the beginning of the journey the Queen is restless and bored with her worldly life. She longs to go beyond the confines of her island nation. This symbolizes where we are at the start

of our quest. Each of us is an island nation ruled by the spirit, by Kundalini. A time comes in our evolution when we've accomplished all we need to accomplish and experienced all we need to experience in ordinary life. It may be a time when we're simply weary of the drama of our lives. We want to go beyond ourselves and beyond all that is known to us. The Queen's advisors can't counsel her, for they know nothing of the inner realm from which her restlessness arises. They only know the outer world dynamics of social, political, and commercial relations. They know nothing of the inner world or the needs of the spirit.

At this point in our journey the people to whom we usually turn for directions—friends, relatives, career counselors, religious authorities, perhaps even a psychotherapist—may offer their best advice, but it belongs to the wrong domain. Our spirit, our inner Queen knows it, and finds no comfort in their words. The Queen doesn't merely want to explore some other nation or even conquer other lands. She wants to go beyond all charted territories. At some point the restlessness of our spirit demands that we look beyond others, beyond relationships, beyond worldly possessions, beyond mastery of worldly things, beyond all that is familiar and seek the Great Unknown. This is divine discontent, one of the first manifestations of the power of Consciousness, the power of Grace, letting us know it's time to return home to our Source. Discontent makes a seeker. Discontent, coupled with the right understanding, makes a spiritual seeker.

At first the Queen doesn't know how to deal with the restlessness she feels. The words of her most trusted advisors are of no help. Roaming the countryside and shores of her nation fails to bring her any closer to the knowledge of what to do next in her life. The energy of divine discontent will not allow itself to be dissipated through the ordinary ways of discharging energy that people develop, like doing things, accomplishing things, or dreaming of new things to do, accomplish or acquire. It's not until she retires to the sacred place of her private chapel and gives herself over to meditation and prayer that she receives the inspiration, the influx of grace, that allows her to see clearly where she must go next. Sitting still is often the last thing we think

of doing when that inner restlessness is demanding movement. When all outer movement fails to calm the agitation, then we may stumble onto the solution—to be still and allow for the necessary inner movement to occur. That’s the movement the energy of Consciousness is trying to create. We are so used to translating inner movements of energy into action aimed at objects of desire that we may misinterpret the initial stirring of Consciousness beginning to lead us on our quest. What is required then is a shift in consciousness, a movement of awareness away from the external world. This brings about the necessary opening for grace, for inspiration, to arise from within and guide us onward.

While praying in her chapel, in her sacred space, internally and externally, the Queen receives her new direction. She doesn’t think of the new direction, she doesn’t reason it through to that conclusion, she receives it as anyone receives an inspiration or intuition. Such things come from beyond the realm of ego control and can only be received. To receive such gifts from our inner guide, our inner guru as Shakti Kundalini is also known, we have to create an open, receptive awareness. Shakti said, ***“You must develop a regular practice of meditation to access your inner wisdom.”***

The Queen’s inspiration is charged with energy and the total certainty of its being absolutely the right thing to do next. Without any doubt distracting her or fragmenting her efforts, all her energy immediately focuses on moving ahead. As you develop proficiency in quieting the mind and accessing your inner source of wisdom and inspiration, then you will be able to move forward with the same Godspeed.

In the beginning of her quest the Queen uses whatever means and knowledge she has at hand to take her to the limits of the known world. She relies on Captain and Will to take her through the initial stage of her journey. In the same way we begin our searching by first defining things in terms of what we know, until we exhaust them all, or receive by grace an experience of what is beyond. We make use of our mind and body to begin our journey. Many of the initial practices done by aspirants of Western and Eastern spiritual traditions focus on the disciplined use of the

mind and body, training them to gather the energy of attention and gaining control of that energy for new uses.

Captain gathers all the charts and maps he can find to guide them. Together with Will he organizes a crew and outfits a vessel to begin the journey. The crew and the ship represent the strengths, limitations, and negativities of our lower nature. We marshal them as best we can to begin our journey. Every true spiritual path has codes of conduct, values, and attitudes to be practiced, along with physical and mental disciplines that serve the purpose of marshaling and focusing our energies. At the outset of our journey, we may gather books and read of the spiritual journeys of others in hopes of being guided ourselves. We may look to various spiritual or religious traditions for maps of what lies beyond the boundaries of the world we are accustomed to. The seeker needs to be aware that even the best and most detailed map is radically different from the reality that the map is trying to collapse and condense into the limited dimensions of the map.

At the outset the Queen prays for grace to guide and protect them on their journey. She has trusted and relied upon God's grace in the past and invokes the Divine with complete faith that God will answer her call. We need divine intervention right from the beginning in order to succeed on our quest. Remember, it is the Divine's power of concealment, Maya Shakti, that prevents us from experiencing the divine nature of our Self and the world around us. Nothing less than the Divine's power of revelation, the bestowal of grace, will illumine what is concealed by the cloaks of individuality. The Queen retired to a sacred place, her chapel, where she previously had received the inspiration to go on her journey. She returns to that sacred place to begin her journey with prayer and humility, asking for help and being open to receive it. The practices of prayer and meditation give access to grace. Humility and open receptivity are the right attitudes for the seeker to practice and eventually to embody without effort. The power of grace was with the Queen from the very beginning of her journey, guiding her from within in the forms of discontent, inspiration, and intuition.

Later in her quest, grace manifests in another traditional symbolic form. The old man whom the Queen meets only at the final stage of her journey is the master teacher, the guru, who in the yogic tradition is known as “the grace bestowing power of God.” A power of God, not a mere individual, even though that power may be more apparent to our limited vision when it seems localized in an individual through whom it flows and who becomes revered as a spiritual master or guru.

When you are thirsty, do you drink the water vapor from the air or try to quench your thirst with a draft of water from a nearby gutter? No, of course not, you go to your bottled spring water or the tap, knowing it comes from a reliable, pure source, available at any time. That’s the guru, no more, no less. The most sublime and rare gurus are ones who over lifetimes of spiritual practices have had the power of grace flow through them, purifying them, cleansing them of selfishness and egohood, leaving them hollowed out and able to serve humanity as a conduit for grace. ***“Examine them closely,”*** Shakti said, ***“some are more hollowed than others!”*** We have to use our discrimination. Viveka, the Sanskrit term for discrimination, is a critical quality to develop in the course of spiritual practice. It is the capacity to discern the difference between Self and self, the eternal and the ephemeral, what’s true and what’s false, what’s pleasant and what’s good.

The power of the guru is a universal power of God. It is the power of divine revelation. One who functions as a guru is a channel for that power, and there are no perfect channels. A seeker must develop the discrimination to differentiate between the two, the power itself and the conduit. A seeker also must be able to evaluate how pure or how tainted the knowledge and experience the teacher they are looking toward for guidance is transmitting to them. It is the seeker’s responsibility to become familiar with the scriptures, the writings of other enlightened beings, and with the voice of their own inner source of wisdom. These three sources of knowledge provide a way of checking the validity of the teacher. If the teacher’s words aren’t in accord with the seeker’s inner experience, the scriptures, and the words of other enlightened beings then doubt arises. If the seeker’s experience isn’t in accord

with the scriptures, the words of enlightened beings and the teacher, then self-doubt arises. In either case one must proceed with caution, resolve the doubt, and abandon the teacher or abandon delusion.

The Captain and his crew weren't aware of the grace in their lives as they sailed beyond the best of their maps, struggling against starvation and thirst, lost, becalmed at sea and lucky to find small islands with fresh water. Our journey is full of tests and obstacles. During those hardships they could have turned back, and many times the crew pressed them to return. So it is on our spiritual journey. We feel lost at times, fortunate to be refreshed upon occasion, gleaned hope from the experiences of others and happy to have some small experience of our own that we can call "spiritual" or meaningful. These are the small islands that appear in the sea of confusion upon which we may feel adrift in the early stages of our quest.

Feeling lost is exactly what is supposed to happen. Even when the soul loses sight of the Divine, the Divine never loses sight of His child. Being lost humbles the Captain and his first mate. It confronts our mind and body with their powerlessness and the limitations of well-reasoned plans. The mind gets intoxicated by its own theories and constructs about the nature of consciousness, God, and the Universe. The mind may be deluded and act as if the quest is to find a truly all-encompassing theory of reality. It envisions ever-grander models and spectrums of awareness, dragging the seeker's attention into new forms of maya, illusion, and distracting the soul from its real purpose. Map-making is fine, but it is no substitute for walking the trail, and it can't protect the limited self, the ego-mind, from feeling lost or out of control. Within its world it is lost and out of control. Within God's world no one is lost or out of reach of the Divine.

Our longing and spiritual thirst during this period can also be a danger. Someone lost and becalmed at sea, dying of thirst, may imagine an island oasis in the distance, a mirage, and expend precious energy trying to get there. In a similar way we may distort or twist ordinary experiences into "divine" ones, deluding

ourselves in the process. If we're fortunate enough to have a true spiritual master in our life, then we may be spared some of this pain and aimless searching. People suffer this most intensely before finding either a reliable and trustworthy mystic guide or a consistent means for accessing their inner source of wisdom.

When the ship ran into trouble the crew desperately wanted to return home and end the journey. Similarly, our lower nature or past tendencies, represented by the crew and the limitations of their sailing vessel, demand that we go back to the ways of the world, based on sense pleasure and ego gratification. All of us confront such a battle within ourselves at some point during our evolution. The battle tests our resolution and our commitment to the spiritual journey. It can't be won without grace.

The trio were dying of thirst and lost beyond the limits of their knowledge. As spiritual seekers we reach the limits of where our mind and body can lead us, where we're thirsting for spiritual knowledge but receive little or none. Our longing intensifies. Though we're on a sea of water our thirst cannot be quenched. Like the salty brine, all the things of the world that surround us cannot slake our spiritual thirst. Only the water that falls from above, only grace, can save us. At the height of their despair the storm came upon the Queen, Captain, Will, and the crew. But what was at first welcomed, later seemed bent on their destruction.

The descent of grace into our lives may seem like a storm of turmoil or it may seem to come at a time when we are most despairing, most fearful, and yet most longing. Grace may come into our lives and disrupt or destroy much of that with which we're familiar and comfortable. Of course these aren't the only ways in which grace flows into people's lives. Grace may pour into us sweetly and freely, but those aren't the occasions that cause doubt or fear. It's during those times, when we feel as if we're without grace or when some force seems to be turning everything in our lives upside down and inside out, that we become frightened. Every genuine quest, every spiritual journey of significance has this period of turmoil, the "dark night of the soul" or the "night sea journey," as radical transformation of our sense of self and the re-

creation of reality occur. When this happens seekers need to know that they are fine, though in pain and turmoil, and they need the company and support of others who know this.

The storm culminates in a brilliant bolt of lightning that destroys the ship and all the crew, leaving the Queen, Captain and Will, safely on the shore of a strange land. This is Shaktipat, the yogic term for the descent of Grace, the true awakening of Kundalini, the true awakening of the Queen. The bolt of lightning was the mighty impulse of grace. In an instant all the negativities and limitations of worldly existence, symbolized by the ship and its crew, were destroyed. In the same instant the Queen, Cap, and Willy were safely delivered from the perils of being lost at sea and deposited on firm ground with their road clearly before them. This is precisely what happens when one receives Shaktipat, the descent of grace that awakens Kundalini. One goes from being awash in the world and trying to find one's spiritual path to having the road clearly opened and many of our negativities and binding habits destroyed. The path onward is immediately apparent to the Queen, to our Kundalini, our power of Self-revelation. It isn't so obvious or alluring to Cap and Willy. Our mind and body, our normal sense of "I," may be disoriented by the reshaping of their reality and resistant to moving further into the unknown.

With Shaktipat, Kundalini awakens and takes over leadership of our spiritual development. The Queen awoke first and commands Captain and Will from then on. At sea she was subject to the winds, the currents, and the advice of the Captain as to what course they should follow. Before Shaktipat we follow our mind, our body, directions from the winds of culture—materialism, music or film stars, new age paths, or whatever. With Shaktipat our spirit is fully awakened within, the whole landscape of our existence changes and our own inner power of Self-revelation, of divine recognition, guides us. The center of gravity for our self-definition begins shifting from mind/body to spirit and beyond. With the great awakening, the Queen takes over and never again relinquishes control. Throughout the remainder of the journey she is in charge. Because she is the embodiment of the highest power of Consciousness, she is able to lead in a way that the Captain never could.



There are parallels between all the cities and corresponding chakras from the system of Kundalini yoga. The cities/chakras represent realms of consciousness from which we normally operate at various times in our ordinary daily life. The direct road that the Queen follows from the earthly realm of awakening to the mountain peak with the wise old man is analogous to the sushumna nadi, the energy channel that forms the path of the awakened Kundalini and connects all the chakras from the muladhara to the ajna chakra, the seat of the master, the abode of the wise old man, and beyond to the transcendent realm of Unity Consciousness in the sahasrara.

The Queen awakens on the ground with the smell of fecund earth, symbolizing the awakening of Kundalini in the muladhara chakra with its earth element. Here the body and mind, Will and Captain, have to confront and move beyond their attachments to pre-shaktipat ways of living and to the security of simple, basic, earthly living. Issues of survival and existence predominate, survival of body and the mental construct of self, of who I am. Willy is concerned about how they would obtain food and shelter, while Cap is despondent over the loss of his ship and crew. He is a sea captain; he doesn't know who he is without a ship and crew to command. He symbolizes our mental/egoic levels of attachment and identification.

The security and simplicity are very alluring to Willy. Our body seeks physical comfort, security, predictable patterns of eating and sleeping. When our consciousness is identified with the body, we feel attached to those things. Willy and Cap aren't able to free themselves from their attachments. It's their nature to be attached to these things, but Consciousness, Shakti-Queen, doesn't have to be restricted or governed by their attachments and what they identify with. The Queen is now the one who carries them through; it's the power of her command that repeatedly moves them on. This is the power of grace moving us ahead. We must remember the Queen, as Kundalini, is the embodiment of grace. Obedience and surrender are all that are demanded of Willy and Cap, body and mind.

One of the Queen's first tasks is to move Willy and Cap through the despair they feel from having lost their ship and crew. Shakti literally spoke about this to me in meditation, strongly emphasizing this point. She said, ***"People who receive Shaktipat often get stuck mourning the loss of old ways of living, old negativities, old habits, and limitations that are at root destroyed with the descent of grace. People waste their time and energy trying to breathe life into their old patterns, clinging to them, holding onto the illusion of their continued existence. Shaktipat destroys much of these and people could be free of them at once, if they would just let them go. Anything which is destroyed with the descent of grace or falls away during the course of the journey is limiting or binding. Nothing is gained by sustaining them or mourning their loss."***

Cap and Willy retain such attachments, but not the Queen. The mind and body, not the supremely free Kundalini, are subject to attachments and conditioning. Our inner spirit delights in moving on, leaving behind bondage and seeking its goal—complete freedom in union with God. At the same time, our mind and body may go through periods of grieving and feeling the loss of what they were familiar with and attached to. We must be compassionate with them.

Kundalini is the power of grace moving and directing the seeker from within. Kundalini is actually more than just attuned to the will of God; it is the will of God. It is God's will that we experience our union with the Divine. Kundalini and her actions are the unfolding of God's will. It is the will of the Divine that all the mysteries of creation be revealed to us from within. Our mind and body need only surrender to that power and obey it as best they can for our journey to proceed.

The command of our inner spirit is not usually as obvious to us as the command of the Queen is to Cap and Willy. They are accustomed to carefully and attentively following the Queen. Our mind and body usually need to develop such qualities over a lengthy period of time in order to be capable of knowing and carrying out the subtleties of Kundalini's commands.

To attain that subtle awareness, the sadhana, the set of spiritual practices, prescribed by one's mystic guide is indispensable. Very few people can initially connect to the Queen, the Spirit of God within themselves, and know with confidence Her divine will. By being with a mystic guide, doing the required spiritual practices, and developing inner discipline, we refine our consciousness, with the result that the stirrings of Kundalini begin to stand out more clearly from the clamoring of the mind and senses. Through dedicated spiritual practice we also build the strength necessary to carry out the commands of our inner Queen, Shakti. These are no small tasks. They are the heart of sadhana, of spiritual life, and may take all of one's time on earth.

The Captain and first mate are able to know the Queen, obey her, and carry out her commands right from the beginning. They embody good discipleship. The reward of their obedience is that they are taken swiftly and directly to the heights of spiritual attainment, and in the end, they are absorbed into the Divine. Once we are able to know the promptings of the Divine Will and obey them, the completion of our journey is ensured. The outer relationship of the mystic guide and disciple helps to form the inner relationship of God to self, teaching the self to be surrendered and obedient to God Self. The true mystic guide connects one to Divine Consciousness, not merely to himself or herself.

The full flowering of Captain's and Will's obedience are also a reflection of the Queen's grace. They, like us, are not left to their own devices. The Queen keeps them from meandering and getting lost. She also prevents them from getting stuck in any city, due to attachments and desires that are stirred in them by the powers in each city. The storm, the awakened Queen, and later the wise old man are manifestations of divine intervention, the power of grace that repeatedly saves Cap and Willy, mind and body, from unconscious identification and binding involvement with the things of their world. Kundalini, God's grace, and the spiritual master prod us along our journey. The Queen commands Cap and Willy to accompany her as she leaves the site of her awakening, the earthy realm of the muladhara chakra, and heads for the watery city in the distance.

The City of Water represents the svadhishtana chakra. This is a realm of passions and illusion. It had a drifting, floating quality. It is a realm of human existence related to primal feelings and sexuality. Willy and Cap, body and mind, fall right in with what was going on. Willy responds physically to what was alluring, while Captain is intoxicated by his fantasies. The body and mind respond according to their natures. At first the pleasures of this realm are most apparent to them. Later, with increased consciousness, the dark side of this realm becomes visible, and Captain and Willy are ready to leave. The dark side includes the greed, attachment, jealousy, fear, pain, and anger that go with the pleasures and passions of this realm.

Not surprisingly, throughout the journey, mind and body, Cap and Willy, repeatedly act according to their nature, a nature conditioned by likes and dislikes, attachments, and fears. By accompanying the Queen they become purified and strengthened, but certain aspects of their basic nature don't change. Instead, they manifest more and more the nature of their Queen by obediently following her commands. Body and mind, Willy and Cap, are always susceptible to influence by the cities, always ready to wander off the path. Their discipline primarily consists of their unwavering obedience to the Queen. They are not inherently detached or ready to ignore the alluring aspects of each city. The cities embody root qualities of mind and body. That's why Cap and Willy so easily identify with and join the inhabitants of each realm. Remember that each city, each chakra, is a center of mind/body consciousness. Kundalini as the Queen is the power that moves them beyond each realm of attachment and desire. She moves the totality of our awareness beyond the limitations of being identified with any realm.

Cap and Willy, loyal to their Queen's wishes, leave the City of Water and head for the City of Fire. They have to curb their wandering natures in order to keep up with the Queen as she goes directly for the next city. Kundalini, one-pointed on her goal, contains the wanderings of mind and body. The City of Fire symbolizes the manipura chakra, the center of consciousness represented by the element fire and located near our navel. Our will power and power of aggression are centered here. The City of Fire brings out other characteristics of the mind and body

through the actions of Cap and Willy than those seen in the previous two realms.

Willy takes pleasure in joining the people as they work with determination and enthusiasm. He enjoys being part of such an energetic group. There's a visceral, physical pleasure that we experience while being part of an energetic hard-working group. The body feels exhilarated having that kind of energy running through it. Willy goes for it, just as he went for the physical pleasures of the Watery City. His actions lack any discrimination or self-reflection; what feels good is the main criteria. The more one is solely identified with the body, the more one's actions will resemble Willy's actions. He doesn't think about what the people of the City of Fire are working toward, whether the group's aims are lofty, healthy, or righteous. Willy portrays an unconscious seeker of pleasure; be it sense pleasure or the pleasure of being an unconscious part of a group. It's a trap that can get us into trouble on the spiritual path as well as in worldly pursuits. We must never surrender our discrimination. The Queen fulfills that function for Will and moves him on toward a higher goal. Kundalini and a true spiritual master guide one in that way, but there are untrue gurus and inner impulses that don't arise from Kundalini that one must be wary of. Seekers must be vigilant and make every effort to sharpen their discrimination.

Captain's thoughts reveal another set of desires and attachments that entrap us in this realm. He is drawn by his desire for power and the fantasy of being a mighty leader, acquiring fame, new territories, and more power. He exemplifies the willful, acquisitive, self-aggrandizing nature of our ego-mind. He revels in his own nature and fantasy. If left to himself he would pursue it wholeheartedly. A commanding Queen and his devotion to her save him from becoming stuck in the City of Fire. Without the awakened Kundalini, we too follow the ways of Willy and Cap. (Even with the aid of an awakened Kundalini most people are liable to follow their old ways. Throughout the journey I was struck by how rapidly Cap and Willy moved along the path due to their surrender and obedience to the Queen.)

The Queen is entertained by the leaders of the City of Fire and is recognized by them as a great ruler. They take her to a place high above the city, from which to view it. The Queen surveys the surrounds and appreciates it for what it is, and for what it is not. It certainly is not her destination. Clearly, there's great power here. These people manifest the ability to access their willpower and focus it with sustained determined self-effort. Great things are accomplished by humanity in this way. The elements can be conquered, industries built. But this isn't the end point. Without a higher knowledge guiding the use of the people's energy it serves only the power drives of the leaders. We see this playing out in the world around us, whether in workplace politics, family dynamics or oligarchs and dictators oppressing millions of people.

The Queen sees that the road continues. The lords of the city may rule it but they are also bound by it. They cannot look beyond it. They fear what is beyond their realm, and they fear the mysteriously changing light beckoning in the distance. But the Queen transcends the environs and is thus free to go beyond the City of Fire. Even if we gain power and mastery over a realm, unless we can be detached and transcend it, we'll be bound by it. Our spirit has the necessary wisdom and mastery. If we dare to break with the herd then we can follow her. The Queen's vision leads her onward. She gathers her two companions and heads for the mysterious light.

They find the Windy City bewitched by the ever-changing light that colors and controls one's moods, thoughts and feelings. Cap, Willy and all the inhabitants of the city are entranced by the light's power, but the Queen pierces its mystery. Just as the City of Fire represents certain characteristics of the manipura chakra, the Windy City symbolizes the anahata, or heart chakra, with its correspondent element air. The heart chakra, according to yogic seers, contains a lingam, a phallic symbol of God, with a steady flame of Light, the pure Light of Consciousness. Similarly, atop the pinnacle in this city, the Queen encounters the Divine Presence as an orb of Light radiating love. So exquisite is the Divine Light that the Queen becomes completely still and absorbed in it, enveloped in love. The peace and contentment she experienced lead her to think that this must be her destination, but it's only a foretaste of what is to come.

The Light of individual consciousness is in essence one with Universal Consciousness, though it takes on a limited form. The Queen came to know the ecstasy of merger in that Divine Light, but the Light, speaking as her own Self, pointed the way onward, beyond all limitations.

The Divine, symbolized by the orb of light, is the power of Consciousness behind the mind. The light is colored and distorted by the crystal filaments around it, but the filaments have no power in and of themselves. The power emanates from the orb of Light. The actual contents of the mind—thoughts, feelings, and so on—are gross manifestations of the power of Consciousness. One's moods, thoughts, and feelings change with the play of lights as the pure power of Consciousness is colored. When I saw the filaments in the vision, they seemed to be some kind of projection from the Divine Light. Their existence depended on the power of the Light in some way that I didn't understand at the time. As with many of the details of the cities, Shakti didn't consider this one important enough at this point to go into. She was most concerned with imparting broad meanings and overall lessons about the journey.

The Queen, rather than being dazzled or enthralled by the colored lights, simply watches them, detached. This is the essence of many meditation techniques for dealing with the mind—witnessing it, not identifying with the play of thoughts, sensations and feelings that make up its content. By doing so, the Queen is able to see in moments of brilliant clarity the source of the deluding light. The source reveals the way to itself. She follows it. In meditation, by watching the mind, we come to see the source of Consciousness behind the mind. The clear Light of Consciousness illumines our way.

Merging in that Light brings such stillness, contentment, and love to the Queen that she thinks this must be her destination. There is bliss and contentment that comes from going beyond the mind in meditation, but it isn't the end of the journey. There is ecstasy and expansion that goes with dropping the limited identities that go with body and mind. With the first realization of "I am Consciousness" great peace washes over one's spirit.

The agitation produced by the desires and fears of those limited identities ceases, just as the weighed down feeling of walking with a heavy overcoat on ends the moment you take it off. However, limitation of a subtler nature remains. This is the realization of “I am Consciousness,” but not the realization of “I am Universal, All-encompassing Consciousness.” The Queen longs for the highest, and the Light informs her that her path continues on to loftier places. It doesn’t allow her to get stuck on this high, but not ultimate level of attainment. She sees and knows this to be true. Without hesitation she continues on her quest.

The Light of Consciousness in the heart is a living flame of love and illumination. It is a spark of the Universal Light of Consciousness. When the seeker opens the heart chakra and makes his or her way to the center where the Light abides in all its glory, then the seeker becomes flooded with love. By bringing one’s consciousness into the presence of the Light in the heart, the clarity and love of that Divine Light will flow into the mind and body, purifying them of many old habits. In addition, the Light will spontaneously flow through the seeker to others nearby, healing and uplifting them.

Shakti said, ***“The heart chakra is of great importance because it is a place where the Light of God flashes forth into the world with radiant love. Most people follow those shimmering rays of love outward until they bounce off something or someone and come back at them. Confusion sets in when the reflecting object is taken to be the source. The source is in your heart. Follow the shimmering rays of Divine Love emanating from the Light within your heart back to their true source, back to the Radiant One seated there. Rest for a while in the warm embracing presence of the Living Flame of Love shining in your heart. Return here as often as you like. . .”***

After penetrating the mystery of the enthralling lights, the Queen is able to free Captain and Will from their spell. The colored lights’ grip on them is so strong that the Queen has to force the awareness of her presence upon them, commanding their attention and pushing them to understand what is happening to their minds.



Cap is able to understand to some degree what the Queen reveals to him about the power of the Light. It helps to free him but he doesn't fully comprehend the Light's mysterious nature. Cap, the personification of limited mind and egohood, has little hope of comprehending the power that is really his root source. The part cannot encompass the whole.

In another way the Captain exemplifies the limitations of understanding through rational knowing. The Queen knows and understands through the direct experience of merger, of union with the power of Consciousness. Our spirit leaves the mind and body behind in meditation and makes its way to greater heights of consciousness. The mystery isn't explained to her but disappears from the vantage point of a higher level of knowledge. Only part of what our awakened spirit knows can be translated into terms that the mind will understand. The Captain, our mind, gains partial release through such limited knowledge, but still must rely on obedience to the Queen, to the Divine Will, to become free.

Willy understands even less than Cap, but his loyal devotion to the Queen enables him to follow her command. For the body, obedience alone is the key; however, it must know to obey the Queen and not the Captain. During the journey the Captain is always submissive to the Queen and argues little, except near the end. On our own journeys the mind seems all too willing to lead the body off in contradiction to the way of God.

The threesome continued their way into the mountains, with the Queen checking the wanderings of Cap and Willy. The steep mountain road tested the fortitude of those two, while the Queen's energy was boundless. She inspired and drove them onward. The trials and challenges of the spiritual journey become greater as one progresses, and the power of grace, Shakti, is ever present to support one. The path becomes more and more arduous for Cap and Willy, but the Queen continues on with greater energy and excitement at the anticipation of reaching her destination. Her true nature as pure Shakti, pure Divine Power, becomes increasingly evident as all obstacles fall before her. Obstacles that will stop the mind and body are nothing to Kundalini. The Captain's and

First Mate's dependence on her for continued progress becomes increasingly obvious. Efforts of the mind and body simply aren't enough to attain the heights of purity and transcendence. Without grace, without the divine Kundalini Shakti, progress would halt. She moves them through physical pleasures, traps of ego, willpower and pride, through emotions, fantasies and through the deluding power of the mind. The Queen is our own transcendent power of Consciousness that draws the mind and body as far up the path of evolution as they can go. The Queen leads Cap and Willy to the Ethereal City in a high mountain pass.

There they encounter the creative power of words and sounds. The realm reveals the power of words to manifest reality. The vishuddha chakra, symbolized by the Ethereal City, is the center that represents the level of consciousness where words and language form. Being at the source of language allowed the Queen, Cap, and Willy to understand all languages. The source of the power behind words lies deeper. This is just the point where that power begins to take the recognizable forms of language and thoughts, the substrate of spoken words. The reality they create unfolds due to the creative power of Universal Consciousness expressed through words and sound.

In the ordinary everyday world, too, people choose to experience collective fantasies while being part of an audience in a story hall, captivated by a storyteller. The storyteller may be a politician, a religious figure, a movie producer, or a reporter. The hall may be your living room, church, temple, school, office, or theater. We're all influenced by the power of words. The story halls capture one's consciousness and hold it in the gross world of actions, desires, pleasures, and pains. Some people choose to experience the energy and inspiration that the mantras and chants produce in the mantra halls. The chanting in the mantra halls transports one's consciousness to ecstatic realms of awareness beyond common thoughts. The story halls reflect the power of words to create grosser and denser levels of reality, ordinary reality for most of us, while the mantra halls reflect the power of words to take our consciousness higher. Yet, the same power underlies the experiences had by those in either hall, and

ultimate freedom lies beyond them both. The halls and the city have to be left behind.

Cap and Willy choose to rest in a story hall while the Queen searches for the three truth-sayers, the masters of this realm. Total mastery of this realm requires complete dedication to the truth, for to say anything else but the truth would create untold pain and chaos. The masters must be absolutely vigilant in upholding the truth, because even a casual slip or an unconsciously spoken word manifests some reality. Spiritual teachers of any school must be vigilant if they want to serve in God's work of bringing souls back to the recognition of their unity with the Divine. If you want to give directions about a path, then you better know that path. Otherwise, you will bear the karmic burden of having misled others, a burden it could take you lifetimes to free yourself of.

The Queen sought the masters to question them about where her destination lies. The masters instantly recognized her nobility, her rulership. They welcomed her as an equal. She was honored and welcomed by the rulers of every city through which she passed. The sovereignty of the Queen was acknowledged in all realms. Kundalini, our Divine Goddess of Light, reigns throughout the inner world. Her power and majesty become more and more visible to us as we progress on the spiritual journey. As the Queen entered each city, she went directly to the heights of it and from that vantage point saw its entirety. Our Kundalini, our inner divine power of Consciousness, enters into each domain of human existence, each city, and from the heights of detached pure awareness grasps the essence of that domain and moves on toward its destination. By passing through all the domains of human existence, all the cities, the Divine Consciousness absorbs into itself all the levels of individual existence, thereby transforming them. The process continues until all levels have been purified of attachment to them and transcended.

True to her nature as Kundalini, the very power of revelation and pure Consciousness, the Queen knows the mysterious power of words and sound to create reality; she also knows her destination still lies ahead. The masters of the realm confirm this

all for her. As the Queen advances on her journey through the cities her true nature becomes more and more apparent. The upward movement of Kundalini through the chakras is evolutionary. The shedding of limitations and expansion of consciousness mark this upward movement of Kundalini just as the downward involutionary movement is characterized by taking on limitations and contraction of consciousness. In order to proceed beyond the Ethereal City, the Queen must gather her companions.

She has to pull Willy and Cap from their fantasy in a story hall and lead them higher into the mountains. It is by her will that they are moved beyond the realm of the Ethereal City. These higher realms of human existence, realms of consciousness, are extremely difficult for the body and mind to attain, much less surpass, on their own. The ability comes from the Divine Will alone. Passing through and beyond all the cities recapitulates the experiential realms of individual existence with the demand that we detach and move on from each one toward some higher goal. Cap and Willy were better able to walk away from the lures of the lower realms, the earthy, watery, and fiery domains. The experience of breaking free of the binding qualities of those cities for a higher goal is a more common human endeavor, and more accessible to the body and mind. People sacrifice passions, security, and power needs for loftier pursuits. But when it comes to the higher realms of consciousness, the heart chakra and the throat chakra, involving the actual power of Consciousness underlying the mind, the binding forces are greater. The Queen has to be much more forceful to move Cap and Willy onward. Our individual will must increasingly depend on the Divine Will, surrendering more and more to its impulse. What sweet ecstasy comes with that surrender! Cap and Willy, mind and body, are freed from the shackles of each city by the infusion of the Queen's will. They are inspired to move on. As the journey proceeds to the summit, they depend almost solely on the Queen's energy to keep them going.

The Queen tries to explain to Willy and Cap the nature of the Ethereal City they've just left, but with almost no success. Captain understands little of what she reveals about the power behind words and Will grasps none of it. Willy moves on at her bidding

and is content with that. The body experiences the power of words through the effects words have on it but doesn't grasp how. One who is thoroughly identified with the body exhibits the limitations that Willy does, in this and other realms. Cap, the ego/mind, is able to understand some of what the Queen reveals about the power of words but is stuck on a conceptual level. The limited mind exists through the power of words; thus it cannot truly know how that power operates until it transcends it. The Queen is that transcendent power of Consciousness that encompasses and reveals the true nature of every realm. In that sense, she is the unbound mind, the pure power of Consciousness.

The arduous climb to the top of the world brings out weakness and resistance in Cap and Will. For Will, the physical demands of the climb make him want to stop or turn back. Captain argues against continuing the journey because there's little more to be gained. He wants to convince the Queen to be satisfied with the heights they have already attained. Gaining the heights of spiritual attainment taxes the body and mind. There are times when the body feels like it just can't continue and weaknesses and latent illnesses may come out, but the Queen is there, grace is there to carry us onward.

Even in its fatigue, the body has a purity and simplicity that is met by the Queen's nurturing, mothering compassion. The body is given the strength to continue. In contrast, our ego/mind will congratulate itself for all it has attained, for how high up the mountain it has gone, as if it were above all others. Our mind may try to convince us there's nothing more to be attained, when in fact the true attainment still lies ahead. The ego/mind's limited vision and clinging possessiveness can make it complacent. It may get a fiery prod from the Queen. The Queen will not be turned back. She will envelop the body and mind with love and carry them to the summit. She may tarry awhile to infuse them with strength or embolden them against their fears, but she will never give up her goal.

Once on the summit, they see the mysterious old man waiting for them outside his cottage. He won't speak to them until they have eaten and rested. The Queen is burning to reach the end

of her journey. Cap and Willy are all too eager to eat and sleep; for them the quest can wait. Though the climb was exhausting and it seems as if they have been traveling for lifetimes to get to this mountain peak, the Queen desires neither food nor rest. She wonders how the old man knew they were coming, why she feels as though he knows her fully, and what does he have to do with her final destination? She absorbs herself in contemplation of the old man, meditating on his form. Stillness radiates from him. At last she becomes absorbed in the divine sparkle of his eyes. Shakti, the Divine Light of Consciousness, may stream from the eyes of a great master and fill one with grace. Our spirit becomes still; consciousness expands in profound meditation.

At this point in the symbolic journey through the chakras we've arrived at the ajna chakra. "Ajna" means command. It is at this level of consciousness that one must receive the command from the inner Guru, the grace-bestower, to rise to the exalted state of union with the Divine. Only those who have purified themselves of egocentricity and have their mind and senses in control can proceed. The Queen is in command of Willy and Captain. She has given herself totally to the quest. She is ready.

In time Cap and Willy rise from their slumber. The old man agrees to answer the Queen's questions. The omniscient old man is the inner Guru, the grace-bestower, the vehicle to union with God. In him and through him the Queen's destination lies, but first she is tested once again. She has passed many tests since leaving her island nation—storms at sea, hardships of the journey, splendid attractions in each city, great powers—all failed to sway her from her course. Upon reaching the limits of the world, the very highest peak, the wise old man offers her and her companions food and rest before answering her questions. That is her test, or if not a test, then another situation in which she demonstrates her true nature. Will her hunger be satisfied with food, will her thirst be quenched with water, will her restlessness find quiet in the unconsciousness of sleep? Cap and Willy, the mind and body, were attracted to the gross substance of food and comforted by the shallow repose of sleep, but not the Queen. She passed the test, she was true to her nature as spirit, as Consciousness, as the sublime

Goddess Kundalini. She feasted on the wise old man, she absorbed herself in him, she drank him in with her eyes, her attention rested on him alone. The light from his eyes, pure Shakti, Divine Light, poured into her. She neither ate nor slept but was nourished by the sweet nectar of God's grace flowing through the form of the spiritual master. Kundalini delights in the pure Consciousness radiating from a saint, one's mystic guide, or the numinous inner form of the Guru.

The old man and the Queen speak for the benefit of Captain and Will. She is already prepared to follow the master's subtlest command. The drama is played out for the benefit of the body and mind—including yours and mine. Cap argued most against what the old man had to say. He refused to believe there could be any destination beyond where they were, and if there was, why bother with the old man—hadn't they gotten this far without him, and why should they believe him when the old man said Cap and Willy would have to remain behind. Cap continues to be true to his nature as ego/mind. The ego/mind, the consciousness of limited individuality, doesn't recognize the true nature of the Guru, the wise old man symbolic of the Self, and doesn't see how the guiding hand of the grace-bestower was directing them throughout their journey. The ego tries to appropriate to itself, to take credit for the progress that is made on the spiritual path. It mistakes the true spiritual master or mystic guide for just another individual like itself. The vision of the ego/mind is bound to the world, the realms of individuality; it cannot see what is beyond. Because this is as high as it can go, the ego assumes this is as high as anyone can go.

Our minds may try to deceive us in this way, but this is the end of the line for individuality; universality lies ahead. To go further one must transcend the limited forms of mind and body. The Queen knows. It was presaged in the Windy City where she left Cap and Willy behind in her ascent to the top of the pinnacle and merged with the Jivatma, the Light of Individual Consciousness. As long as their forms exist, the mind and body are earth-bound. Kundalini alone can shed her form and transcend worldly existence. Our unleashed inner power of Consciousness, the awakened Kundalini, knows the true nature of the inner guide and follows his or her

command without hesitation. She directs Cap and Willy to wait for her there as she goes ahead. Our unbounded spirit, our Queen, leaves behind the bound forms of body and mind to follow the power of grace, the power of Self-revelation. She promises to return. There's nothing for the body and mind to do but be still and wait. Their surrender is total and final.

Meditation involves a similar process. We put the body and mind to rest while our consciousness transcends them and merges with God. Naturally, the mind and body don't always surrender without a struggle! They may act more like cranky, overtired children refusing to go to bed than obedient servants waiting quietly and patiently for the return of their master or mistress. In the end they have to obey the Divine Mother, though the end may seem to be a long time in coming.

The Queen and the wise old man leave the cottage and go out into the night. Side by side they walk, drawn toward an orb of exquisite scintillating blue-white light high in the night sky. There's an equality in their side-by-side step, the two are one and the same; two sides of the same coin. The awakened Kundalini is the Guru, the grace-bestowing power of God. Leaving behind the abode of individuality, they rise above the world. The Queen suddenly sees herself as formless Light, she sees the old man as formless Light, and realizes they are the same Divine Light of Consciousness. As all differences between the old master and the Queen dissolve, we can see that in essence our Kundalini is the same divine Power of Consciousness as the ideal Guru. The Queen returns her gaze to the orb of Light above her and they all merge into one ecstatic Divine Light, the entire universe dissolves into shimmering Consciousness, dancing Blue Light. This is the point in the evolution of consciousness where the last remaining form and contraction of Consciousness are shed, revealing the underlying truth of unity, of identity between the individual, localized form of consciousness created by Kundalini, and the Universal, All-encompassing Consciousness of the Divine. Because our mind works in a linear way it is hard for it to grasp that the unfolded, expanded, formless Consciousness exists at all times and places along with the individualized contracted form of that same



consciousness. It appears that this evolutionary expansion occurs resulting in the boundless, formless Divine Consciousness. Thus, the all-knowing power of Consciousness referred to as the inner Guru is the same power of Consciousness known as Kundalini.

The Queen pulled my awareness into hers, showing me that at this point our awareness expands to include everything. "I AM CONSCIOUSNESS, I AM THE LIGHT, THE UNIVERSE IS CONSCIOUSNESS, THE UNIVERSE IS LIGHT, I AM THAT." Shapes and forms exist and don't exist, boundaries melt, no longer is there a self and non-self, no longer an experiencer and an experience, no beginning and no end, just all-encompassing loving Consciousness...everything, nothing, both, neither – all words fail. The transcendent orb of pure Light is God, the pure illuminating source of all that is. Merger with the Divine brings total illumination, total enlightenment. This ineffable union was the goal, though in that moment all notions of a journey and a destination disappeared. Time itself dissolves into eternity beyond duration.

Considerable time passed for Cap and Willy before the Queen returned. Her form re-emerged from the Light, forever transfigured, forever one with the Infinite Effulgence. She descended to the summit where her faithful companions awaited her. They stared in wonder as the Queen, truly the Goddess of Light, approached. Her stunning radiance and profound serenity moved them to fall to their knees in reverence. With great love she raised them up and dwelt with them there until the end of their days. The Queen knows them to be a part of her, rays of Divine Consciousness. In time Cap and Willy began to shine as if from the reflected brilliance of the Queen. In a flash of light at their death Cap and Willy merged into their beloved Queen and into the Infinite.

The forms of the body and mind may be more rigid and limited than that of Kundalini, but their essential nature is the same as that of the Queen. In the end they too dissolve into Consciousness.

The Queen has infinite love and compassion for Cap and Willy. She never abandons them; she's committed to leading them from beginning to end. The Queen didn't denigrate the two of them for repeatedly identifying with the people of each city, nor did

she revile the cities for their limitations. She simply accepted her two companion's propensity for getting stuck as part of their nature, just as she accepted the characteristics of each city as the nature of that realm. As a part of our journey, we experience all the realms of human existence, recognize their limitations, and move on. The difference between the "old realms" of experience and the characteristics of the "new realm" cities, or life before and after shaktipat, is the presence of that dynamic consciousness, the awakened Kundalini, who recognizes the limitations of each realm, each domain of experience, and who one-pointedly heads for the final destination.

In essence, the Divine Mother was saying that the earthly realm of basic existence, survival, and security is part of the larger domain of human existence but it isn't the destination. Don't identify with it and get stuck there. The watery realm of passions, sense pleasures, and procreation is part of the domain of human existence, but it isn't the destination; don't get stuck there. The fiery realm of willpower, pride, determination, and dominance is part of the domain of human existence, but it isn't the destination. The windy shifty realm of moods, thoughts, and feelings, illumined by a spark of Universal Consciousness, isn't the destination either. Nor is the ethereal realm, with its tremendous power of words and sound, the destination, though it is a part of the human domain. Even the seldom attained and rarefied realm of the wise old man on the summit of the world, the Guru's abode—whether it's an ashram, a monastery, zendo, or retreat center—is part of the domain of human existence and it isn't the destination.

There is only one ultimate destination for the evolution of our spirit: union with the Divine, merger into the all-encompassing Light of Consciousness, the dissolution of all forms, the simultaneous existence and nonexistence of all boundaries, pure transcendence and transfigured re-emergence. This alone is the final resting-place for our Kundalini, our power of Self-revelation. Here we come to know the radical freedom, the boundless loving compassion and unshakeable equanimity that are our true nature. This empowers us to walk these into our everyday lives.

The attainment of the state of union isn't intended to leave one in a disembodied state of transcendence. Instead, this state divinizes worldly existence. The Queen re-emerges transfigured, shining with the Light of Divine Consciousness, and brings that Light down to earth, down to the summit where Captain and Will await, down to the realm of the body and mind.

The final scene of the transfigured Queen returning to the mountain top reveals something of the nature of an enlightened person. Captain and Will are in a way still bound—the mind and body remain limited structures until their forms completely dissolve—but Consciousness, as embodied by the Queen, is no longer bound to the world nor tied to the limiting structures of the mind and body. Captain and Willy, mind and body, have become totally surrendered to the will of the Divine Consciousness, the Queen. Their actions reflect only her presence; they reflect the light of her consciousness alone. Divine Consciousness “enlightens” the mind and body of saints in this state. They glow with this illumination, though only a few may be able to perceive it.

The transfigured Queen continues her descent back into the world accompanied by her devoted companions, though for her there is no descent at all. She moves entirely within the Self, all she perceives is God manifesting God. Because she embodies God so fully, she serves as a perfect channel for God's loving grace. Blessings flow to those who simply see her and to those who make an offering of love to her. We're called to walk the Light of our divine nature into the world through all the everyday actions and encounters we engage in. This is the culmination of the hero's journey, the return to the world with the gifts we have received.

Just seeing a great saint allows the soul a refreshing draft of grace. This is true regardless of whether they are seen in a dream, in meditation, or in the waking state of consciousness. Many, if they had an opportunity to be near a saint, might think it is important to be seen, to be noticed, to have the saint acknowledge or recognize their presence in some way. However, it's not important to be seen but to see, to truly See, to apprehend the reflection of your Self. Shakti said, ***“Be the seer not the seen.”*** Whether you are aware of

it or not, the Light and Grace that emanate from a saint will enter you through your eyes as you behold such a holy being. The eyes, as well as the other senses, are always searching for the reflected light of one's own projected love, one's own projected Self. When these gateways to the soul focus on the blazing form of a God-realized being, they are flooded with Light (even in dreams and visions). In that moment the soul receives an enormous influx of grace. If the person is new to the experience of being in the presence of a bearer of Light, he or she may be confused, bedazzled, and miss what has happened. Instead of knowing what truly happened, the individual may remember and even imitate something unimportant about the holy one—his or her speech, dress, physical looks, surroundings, or some other irrelevancy, positive or negative. It doesn't matter if their conscious mind keys in on the wrong element, the soul knows the truth and takes in the blessing. Even if the person is unconscious of it, the effects of seeing such a holy being are always beneficial.

The other senses can also be portals through which the grace of an enlightened one will enter the heart. To hear the spoken words of a saint, to receive the gracious touch of a saint, to taste the food blessed by a saint, to inhale the divine fragrance of a saint, these are rare gifts of God. Again, this is true if it occurs in dreams or meditations, as well as in the waking state of ordinary reality.

As the radiant Queen traveled the world, blessings also flowed to those who made an offering of love to her, regardless of whether they were able to see her or be near her. People are in danger of forgetting the profound importance of making an offering, a sacrifice, to the Divine. When you make an offering, when you sacrifice something of lesser value for something of greater value, you create a space within your spirit for grace, an opening for God to more fully manifest the Divine Presence within you. The most valuable offering you can make is your conscious attention.

The more you invest your consciousness in something, the more valuable it becomes. Consciousness is the most precious commodity in the world, surpassing even precious metals and jewels. The value of anything is really a symbol of the consciousness, the attention, invested in that thing. Companies

are willing to pay four million dollars per minute for advertising time during the Superbowl because of all the attention, all the consciousness they hope to attract to their product. Your attention is the most valuable asset you own. Look at how you manage it; look at whether or not you are in control of it. You can tell what is truly valuable to a person by looking at what they give their attention to. If you were to make a record of what you thought about, what your consciousness dwelled upon during the course of a day, you would become shockingly aware of what that says about your values. Not what you profess to value, or would like to think you value, but what you actually value enough to give it your attention.

Shakti said, ***“Wake up! It’s your consciousness and you can change what you are investing it in. Make your conscious attention an offering to God. Continually offer your consciousness to God through prayer, meditation and service. In time you will see God as everyone, everything, everywhere.”***

The Queen sacrifices everything, even putting her life in jeopardy, to pursue the highest. Before her true awakening she didn’t know she was seeking union with God. She knew that all the worldly attainments she had didn’t satisfy the longing and restlessness of her spirit. She trusted the discontent she felt. She trusted her own inspiration and intuition. She trusted in God to guide her and protect her on her journey. Her discontent, her inspiration and her trust in God were the greater treasures to which she sacrificed the lesser—the rulership of her nation, the advice of her ministers, and the needs and desires of others for her to stay.

After her awakening she continues to be guided by her restlessness, her intuition and her faith in God. She sacrifices the despair and attachment to what was familiar and lost at sea in order to follow the path given to her. The Queen sacrifices all that could be had in each city in order follow her heart, her longing for the highest, which compels her onward. Through Divine Grace and trust in her own discontent and intuition she attains the highest. Her attainment then allows her to be of the greatest possible benefit to people everywhere. By seeking the ultimate personal good, realizing one’s union with the Divine, the ultimate public good, bringing God’s grace into the world, is also achieved.

The Captain and Will sacrifice everything to their loyalty and love for their Queen. Their total obedience and surrender to her command purifies and polishes them to the point where they mirror her Light. If you want to progress most rapidly on the journey led by Kundalini, then purify your awareness in the crucible of meditation, attune your inner senses to the commands of Kundalini, the living presence of the Divine within, and joyfully allow your mind and body to accompany her on this miraculous quest.

You'll need guides on this journey, ones with great wisdom and experience. Take care in choosing them. Some guides can lead you out of your homeport and into the sea, but no farther. Others can take you as far as the first cities and then they become lost. When you see that your guide has reached the limits of his or her knowledge, don't hesitate to leave and search for a more competent one. If you find a selfless guide whose knowledge and experience encompass the entire journey through the inner realms, then know you are enormously blessed.

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In the yogic tradition Shakti is seen as ever playful. Part of her play with this experience has been the ongoing delight of discovery, finding truths she enfolded in it and watching others discover truths in it relevant to their own paths. You're invited to contemplate this gift of the Divine Mother, Kundalini Shakti, and play with it in ways that allow you to gain whatever is meaningful and valuable in it for you on your quest. More of her gifts can be found in *O My Beloved: Whisperings From The Divine Heard By Kalidas* and *Kali's Bazaar* penned by Kalidas. Please visit [www.thesoulsjourney.com](http://www.thesoulsjourney.com) for more information.

#### END NOTES:

- 1) Lawrence Edwards, *Psychological Change and Spiritual Growth Through the Practice of Siddha Yoga* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1986), unpublished doctoral dissertation. Research published in the J. of Transpersonal Psychology, 2022, vol. 54, no.1. *Analysis of Spiritual Awakening in a Kundalini Tradition: Psychological Change and Spiritual Growth*; Lawrence Edwards, PhD, Marjorie H. Woollacott, PhD







## About the Author

Lawrence Edwards grew up in a suburb of New York City. His mystical experiences that first began as a young child led him to the formal study of meditation and psychology in undergraduate and graduate school. He studied with transpersonal psychologist, Dr. Kenneth Ring, at the University of Connecticut, and graduated magna cum laude in 1974. During

this time, he practiced meditation and hatha yoga and began practicing Tibetan Buddhism with Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. He continued studying in Buddhist and yogic traditions, which culminated in his training as a monk (swami) under the direct guidance of his Kundalini meditation master in India. He went on to earn a PhD from Temple University in 1986 where he was honored as a University Scholar. His doctoral research delineated the types of psychological change and spiritual growth experienced through the long-term practice of traditional Kundalini yoga. Kundalini is the ancient yogic term for the innate universal power of Consciousness, the power of transformation and revelation, which is the root of all forms of yoga.

Later Dr. Edwards received teachings and empowerments from H.H. the Dalai Lama, H.E. Tsewang Sitar Rinpoche, and Gelek Rinpoche. In addition to practicing and teaching meditation for more than fifty years, he has trained in Jungian depth psychology, transpersonal psychology, and is board certified in neuro-biofeedback. He served as president of the Northeast Regional Biofeedback Society and as president of the Kundalini Research Network. Dr. Edwards has been in private practice offering transpersonal psychotherapy for more than thirty years, and served on the faculty of New York Medical College from 1998-2022. Dr. Edwards is the founder and director of the Anam Cara Meditation Foundation, a 501(C)3 nonprofit educational organization that he started in 2001 right after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which had such a devastating impact on his suburban New York community and beyond. The mission of Anam Cara (ancient Gaelic for “friend of the soul”) is to make the transformative practices of meditation freely available to all. Dr. Edwards has offered free weekly meditation programs, in addition to retreats and courses for more than two decades. He continues to work with people interested in Kundalini, deepening their meditation practices and spiritual development.



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